

Whole Woman's Health of Austin
Transforming Healthcare One Woman at a Time
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Chlamydia

Chlamydia is a micro-organism which combines features of both bacteria and a virus. This makes it treatable with certain antibiotics (as for bacteria), but also difficult to diagnose and culture (as for viruses). Chlamydia is transmitted by sexual contact. It can grow in the penis, vagina, cervix, fallopian tubes, and pelvis. Chlamydia is often present without causing symptoms.

Symptoms:

Symptoms of Chlamydia in the male include burning with urination and white discharge from the penis. Symptoms of Chlamydia in the female are less obvious, but include yellowish discharge, pelvic pain, urinary burning pain, and pain with intercourse. Many times, however, men and woman show no symptoms of Chlamydia at all. It is unknown how long the Chlamydia infection can lie dormant before causing symptoms.

All women that are sexually active are at risk for infection with Chlamydia. Chlamydia is dangerous because it can infect the fallopian tubes and pelvis silently, causing damage to the tubes and to the pelvis which can result in infertility. Sometimes, Chlamydia can cause a serious infection, Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) this is a massive infection of the uterus, fallopian tubes, and other pelvic organs which can cause infertility, systemic infection, or death.

Testing:

Chlamydia is detected only by a tissue culture or a chemical test that finds the enzyme in the Chlamydia organism. It cannot be detected under a microscope and rarely on the Pap smear. The test involves taking a swab of the cervix or penis and performing the enzymatic test. This test is about 92% accurate, meaning that there is a possibility that the Chlamydia is present and still testing negative. For this reason, if there is a suspicion of infection with Chlamydia, treatment should be administered regardless of the test result.

Treatment:

Treatment for Chlamydia involves taking an antibiotic for one to two weeks and then having a repeat culture for the Chlamydia two weeks afterward. Both partners should be treated, as the male may carry the Chlamydia infection and re-infect his partner if gone untreated.